

European Exploration of the South Atlantic 1499–1578

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1499–1500 Amerigo Vespucci, Italian sailor, explores coast of what is now Venezuela on a Spanish expedition. His reports make it clear for first time that there is a large, unknown continental landmass between Europe and East Asia. It is named America after him

1500 Portuguese explorer Pedro Alvares Cabral, blown off course while exploring African coast, is carried by strong currents across Atlantic. Discovers what is later called Brazil and claims it for Portugal in accordance with **Treaty of Tordesillas** (1494) treaty partitioning world into Spanish and Portuguese colonial empires, giving possession of islands discovered to west or east of a line 370 leagues (c. 1000 miles) west of Azores to Spain and Portugal respectively)

1519–1521 Spanish conquistador (conqueror-colonist), Hernán Cortés, establishes city of Vera Cruz (Villa Rica de Vera Cruz) on coast of what is now Mexico and conquers Aztec Empire.

1519–1521 Portuguese Ferdinand Magellan explores eastern coast of South America in Spanish-funded attempt to reach India around southern tip of new continent. He enters Pacific by way of Strait of Magellan, so pioneering southwest route to Asia

1526 Sebastian Cabot (son of John Cabot, discoverer of North America) on a Spanish expedition explores east coast of Brazil and course of Plate, Paraná, and Paraguay Rivers, searching for a route to Pacific

1531–1535 Spanish conquistador, Francisco Pizarro, lands on west coast of South America and conquers Inca Empire in what is now Peru. He founds city of Lima

c. 1519–1554 South America is explored by Spanish nobles, adventurers, and missionaries in search of gold, esteem, and new peoples to convert to Christianity

1578 English Captain Francis Drake explores west coast of South America on circumnavigation of globe

